



## Books on Tape

Posted by **Pierluigi Oliverio** on Monday, July 23, 2007

It's my turn to complain about traffic. Traffic: another reason to keep jobs in San Jose.

I join over 50 percent of San Jose residents who leave their homes every day to travel to their jobs to earn a living outside of San Jose. Those of us, who commute, trek highways 101, 880, 85, 87 and 280 mostly north to the "land of jobs." I am getting back on the road and joining my fellow residents on our neighborhood streets as we try to snake our way to the freeway entrance—a feat in and of itself. I hesitate to say this, but now I am reminded why people cut through neighborhoods. Saving a few minutes commuting is a big deal to many with all the traffic congestion to slow us down.

As I mentioned last week, I thought it was important to keep my private sector job so that I would stay in touch with "reality." Well, reality includes the severe traffic problems that residents face every day while commuting back and forth to work. Over half of San Jose residents leave the city with long commutes, which equates to time away from their families and communities.

For me, my commute wasn't so bad when I first started with my company because they were located in San Jose. Unfortunately, my company didn't see any advantages to growing in San Jose and moved its offices away. Now, any route I take north usually has standstill traffic. It doesn't matter whether I take 87 to 101 or 280 to 85 to 101. There seems to be no alternatives—no short cuts—to escape the traffic. I marvel at all these San Jose drivers who travel to their respective destinations for work and then travel back to "the Capitol of Housing: San Jose," spending much time waiting in traffic. Thank goodness for books on tape!

Often my work takes me onsite to client locations which include new venture capitalist funded companies. This month I have visited companies in San Mateo, Redwood City, Palo Alto, Pleasanton, Dublin, Hayward, Cupertino, and Menlo Park, among others. At every company I visited in these cities, I met people that live in San Jose.

In addition to their commute, they also spend their money close to where they work on items such as gas, lunch, dry cleaning, etc. Their sales tax then generates money for the respective city's public safety officers, parks and libraries.

In my opinion, San Jose has done more than any other city in the Bay Area with regards to providing housing. The council recently passed the five-year housing budget for the first time and included "extremely low income" (ELI) opportunities. Although it is important to provide housing opportunities for people of all income levels, I do believe that we need to be proactive in retaining land for future employment in San Jose. We don't need to convert every piece of open space to housing. In fact, I think it is a good idea to let land sit for a while. San Jose has many attributes, including our diversity, neighborhoods etc., to which we should also add "land for jobs."

It is important for our city's future that new companies start in San Jose, grow in San Jose and, finally, stay in San Jose. Commutes are not going away; they are getting worse. I look forward to our 2040 General Plan where we can discuss and define what net loss means to San Jose, and hopefully somewhere in those conversations, we can also show how keeping jobs in San Jose will equal less traffic and more time with family and friends.

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